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Neglected Arabia



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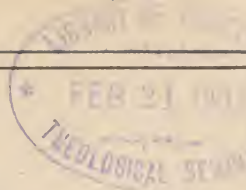
Neglected Arabia



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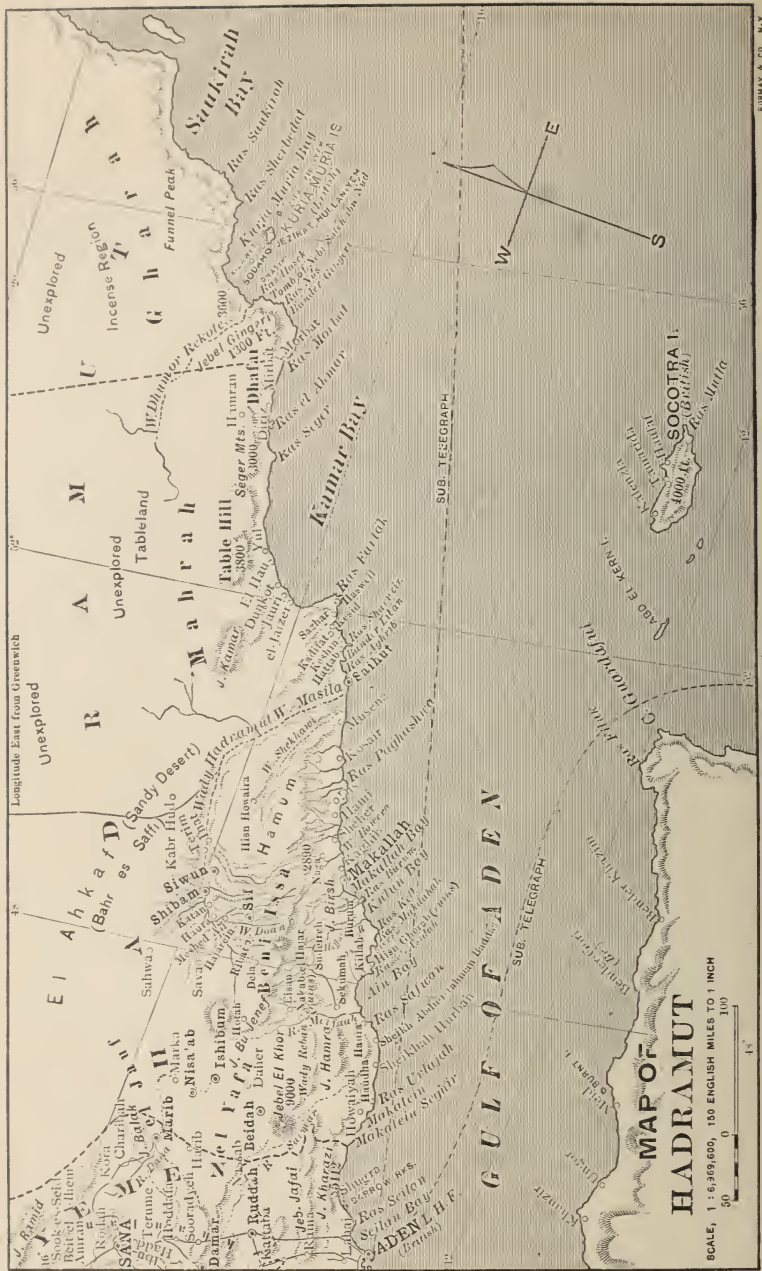
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October=December, 1902.

AN APPEAL FOR HADRAMAUT,* ARABIA.

BY REV. S. M. ZWEMER, D.D., F.R.G.S.

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The evangelization of the world in this generation, or in the next generation, is impossible, unless the unoccupied fields, hitherto neglected, are entered and evangelized. One of the widest regions yet untouched by missionary effort is the whole of Southern Arabia, from Aden to Muscat, a distance of twelve hundred miles, and with a population of over a million and a half souls. From the earliest times this province was called Hadramaut. In Genesis 10 : 26 Hazarmaveth is named as the son of Joktan, and on the Himyaritic inscriptions, five centuries before Christ, the name is spelled as it is now, t-m-r-d-h, and has the same significance, "valley of death." The name was not given because of the unhealthiness of this part of Arabia, but probably commemorates some early battle-field of the nations.

Hadramaut is one of the least-known parts of unknown and neglected Arabia. In 1843 Von Wrede made his remarkable journey and penetrated inland as far as the quicksands of Ahkaf. Only two or three other travelers have followed him. The coast as far as the chief port, Makallah, is comparatively well known, but the many fertile valleys and oases of the highlands are yet unexplored, and were, until Theodore Bent's journey, largely unknown.

Beginning at Aden, Hadramaut may be divided into three districts: that north of Makallah, inhabited by the El Yafa and

*The name of this district is also spelled Hadramut.

Bni 'Isa tribes ; the country of the Mahrah Arabs, north of Kamar Bay ; and, further east, the Gharah tribes. The first region is best explored, most accessible, and most fertile of the three. Yet, as far as I know, no missionary has been to any of its towns, or a Bible colporter along its coast, since my journey to Makallah in May, 1891.

While the Christian Church at large has been in ignorance of the condition and the needs of this field, the providence of God has been preparing the way for its conquest. Since Aden was occupied by the English in 1839, their influence and authority has practically extended along the whole south coast of Arabia. The coast has been surveyed and the interior partly explored. Makallah has now communication with Aden by steamers, and an Indian post-office has been opened there. In 1891 our journey to Makallah took twenty-one days in a native boat—a sort of wooden-shoe hulk with one short, heavy mast, and rigging of palm-leaf ropes. This chief port of western Hadramaut, and the strategic center for the conquest of the province, is built on a projecting point of land of the lofty chalk hill *Jebel el Kara*. The land rises from the coast in a series of terraces to *Jebel Hamra* (5,284 feet), which is connected on the northwest with *Jebel Dahura*, over 8,000 feet high. In the account of my first visit I wrote :

After long delays and continual contrary winds we came in sight of Makallah. It is a second Jaffa, with high and well-built houses, two prominent mosques, and a large Bedouin encampment west of the city. The harbor and docks would do credit to a European government, while the row of forts, the public wells, and the large market-place prove that the ruler of Makallah is a sultan more than in name.

Ten years after I can substantiate this statement by the remarkable photograph of an Arabian sky-scraper and the Boulevard of the metropolis of Hadramaut.* Such high dwellings are a characteristic of all the towns inland as well as on the coast. Both in their architecture and their domestic arts the Arabs of Hadramaut show that their ancestors were civilized in the days

*The photographs for this article were given me by Prof. Jules Bonnier, of the Sorbonne, and were taken by him on his journeys along the coast of Arabia last year.

when the Arabs of Mecca and Medina were in ignorance. The old empire of the Himyarites has left its record not only on the rocks in hundreds of inscriptions but on the language and customs of the people. Add to this the long influence of trade with India and the Malay archipelago, and one can understand why South Arabia is so far on the road to civilization.

Nearly all the wealthy Arabs of Java and Sumatra came from Hadramaut, and Van den Berg traces the intimate relations that continue to exist between these countries to the original conquests of Islam in the Malay archipelago by Hadramaut Arabs. The population of the country may be divided into four classes. Firstly, there are the large tribes of nomads or Bedouins scattered all



A "SKY-SCRAPER" IN ARABIA.

The Sheik's House, Makallah, the metropolis of Hadramaut.

over the land, who do the carrying trade or are soldiers for the town-dwellers. Although their low state of civilization makes them nearest the nomads, they never live in tents, as do the Arabs of the north. The rich have houses and the poor live in caves. Secondly, there are the town Arabs, of better if not purer stock. Many have East-Indian blood, as the Hadramis have intermarried with the Javanese for centuries. They live in the towns and own the larger part of the fertile lands. Between them and the Bedouins there are frequent feuds. The third class are called Seyyids and Sherifs, a sort of aristocratic hierarchy, who trace their descent from Mohammed. Their influence is

enormous ; they have considerable wealth, and are the custodians of education and learning. Although they are conservative and oppose all external influence in their country, they are on the side of law and order. The fourth class are the negro slaves ; although not as numerous as in Oman, they are found everywhere and multiply rapidly. The Arabs of eastern Hadramaut are nearly all of the first class. Their country has few oases, and the inhabitants are very poor. But judging from the experience of Carter, Wellsted, and Bent, they are not hostile, and are in everything but the name pagans rather than Moslems. Their common dialect is distinct from the Arabic spoken elsewhere, their customs are peculiar and very primitive. Carter says :

It is only here and there on the coast that we met with a man who could say his prayers ; those of the interior are wholly devoid of religion, having no idea of God or devil, heaven or hell.

In stature the Mahrabs are almost dwarfs ; for dress they only wear a loin-cloth. Extreme poverty and misery is the lot of those who dwell on the coasts. The upper parts of the mountains are covered with good pasturage, and here, too, frankincense and gum trees are plentiful. The people are friendly to strangers.

Western Hadramaut is, like Yemen, a country of mountain villages and agriculture. Besides a large quantity of coarse grains and fruits, tobacco is exported. Makallah has also a trade in mother-of-pearl, incense, ambergris, and shark fins, which is increasing every year. The population of this town is about ten thousand. Shibahm, the capital of the hill country, has a large population and a comparatively cool climate. If a mission were once established at Makallah, the missionaries could here find relief during the hottest weather. A single glance at the maps of this wonderful country tells how large a field is here accessible for the bold pioneer of the Gospel. The mountain passes are dotted with the names of villages. Bent says :

Without photographs to bear out my statements, I should hardly dare to describe the magnificence of these castles and villages of Hadramaut. That at Haura is seven stories high and covers fully an acre of ground. The doors are exquisitely decorated with intricate wood-carving.

Our photograph shows such a doorway, and also gives a group of typical Arabs at Makallah—the Bedouin, the townsman, and the slave. Would to God that some one would see that here is an *open door* for the Gospel as well!

Ever since Mohammed's successors blotted out the dying Christianity of Nejran and Yemen and Socotra this "valley of death" has never heard the message of life. In Sanaa, the



A GROUP OF TYPICAL ARABS AT MAKALLAH, HADRAMAUT.

cathedral of Abraha, built in 567 A. D., is now used for a Turkish cavalry stable. In Hadramaut there are inscriptions that tell of a Christ who is known no longer. In Socotra, on the hill Ditrerre, of the Hamar range, "a perfect mass of crosses" of every possible shape is carved, perhaps to mark a Christian burial-ground.* *Alas! now neither the hill tribes of Yemen, nor the people of Socotra,*

*See the appendix of Bertt's "Southern Arabia."

nor of any part of Hadramaut, have a single living witness for the crucified!

A mission to South Arabia is possible and practicable. The Keith Falconer Mission is working into Yemen from the south. The American Arabian Mission is opening up Oman and the East. Who will start a new work and meet us half way through the dark peninsula? Where are the pioneer spirits among the large army of student volunteers? Who was it that applauded "the evangelization of Arabia in this generation" at the Cleveland convention? Are all the volunteers to sail along these Arabian coasts in P. & O. ships for India and Burma and Siam? A medical missionary would be welcomed everywhere by nomad



WAVES OF SAND IN THE DESERT OF KURIA MURIA ISLANDS.

as well as town-dweller. For Bible distribution and Arabic Christian literature this is a virgin field. Where is there a small band of men who will organize a new effort for this great unknown land? Those who accept the challenge do not go on a holiday excursion; but neither is it a forlorn hope. If there has been such wonderful success among the Moslems of Java and Sumatra, who can tell but God will honor faith here also among their kinsmen? Our mission in East Arabia needs reinforcements, but even a half a loaf is better than no bread of life for those who die of hunger. We turn away, therefore, from our own need, and plead now for those who have no pleader. There is no danger of encroachment, and even when the land is occupied we will be yet too far apart for comity.

More eagerly than the English garrison did at Ladysmith, we look for reinforcements for Arabia. Those for whom we look and pray to begin work in Hadramaut must be in the reserve army of our Great King. His name is the Lord of Hosts. His arm is never shortened; He is never discomfited by any disaster, nor will He grow weary under the travail of His soul till He be satisfied. He is not yet satisfied in Arabia. His resources are boundless and opportunities endless. Hope deferred never makes His heart sick whose days are the endless cycles of eternity. Conscious of His supreme power and love we can not but obey His own injunction, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the Harvest that he send forth laborers into His harvest." It is not a question of money, for the silver and the gold are His as well. There is no doubt that when the recruits are ready to sail, the commissariat will be prepared also. If naught is provided for them, we are willing to share rations rather than remain unrelieved. Will you come? Our appeal is to you, and our prayer to God. As a missionary working under like circumstances has said:

Our King can do without any of us, and He will devise means whereby His kingdom shall be extended, in spite of the apathy of his people at home. But woe to that soldier of the cross who hangs back and is unwilling to serve when the King's call for volunteers for the front comes to his ears! We dare to think it a noble thing when a man or woman leaves home comforts and worldly prospects to follow the King on foreign service. Should we not rather think it a deadly disgrace that the King should have to call twice for men to fill posts of difficulty and danger or of loneliness and drudgery in the outposts of His empire?

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THE HOSPITAL AT BAHREIN.

S. J. THOMS, M. D.

The hospital is now nearly completed although there still remains some plastering and some odd pieces of work to be done.

*Occupation of
Hospital.*

At the time of our annual Mission Meeting at Bahrein in January, we hope formally to dedicate it to the sacred purpose for which it was built.

We were so much in need of more room that we moved into it about a month ago although much remained to be done at that time, and mason and carpenter work has been going steadily on around us. The part of the equipment ordered from London, the paint, varnish, locks and large iron letters for the name have not yet arrived.

*Changes in
Plans.*

The doors and windows we have had made here instead of in India as was thought best at first, and the roof is made of mud covered with plaster instead of iron. We found this cheaper and we believe much cooler.

With the twelve foot verandahs entirely surrounding the building, and the sun shades to be put up at the east and west ends, the sun will at no time during the day touch the walls of the building proper. This will make the interior as cool as is possible in this climate—several degrees cooler than the Mission House.

*Coollest Building
in Bahrein.*

Of course when we moved into the Hospital many new rules had to be formulated and as Arabs like to go as they please and object to rules and regulations we anticipated much more trouble than we experienced in establishing the new regime. They also put so much stress upon precedents that it is very difficult to change a custom once established. Accordingly we had our rules and plans for work thought out and put all in force the first morning. As the place and all surroundings were new they expected new regulations and fell in line very readily and now everything moves as smoothly as if the people had always been used to hospitals. We also find patients much more willing to come into the hospital than we had expected. Five cataracts have been removed, three iridectomies performed, two amputations, a thumb and a thigh, besides several small operations. The number of patients has increased until it reaches 120 in one day. Many of these require treatment for more than one ailment but multiple treatments are not counted, as our record shows only the number of patients treated.

The False Fast.

As next month is the month when Moslems fast all day and eat and drink all night, not so many patients will come for treatment as we are not accommodating enough to open the Dispensary (except for emergency cases) and they will not even take medicine during that month. However, after this month of fasting (gormandizing) is over we will probably have more than ever so we will have our stock mixtures for dyspepsia ready, also our sermons on true and false fasts. They often ask us if we never fast, thinking to air their righteousness, and are surprised when we tell them that we fast twelve months in the year instead of only one, except that we eat during the day and fast all night, while they fast during the day and eat all night. This latter is not an exaggeration as they actually do eat and drink about all night and sleep during the day. For more meat and expensive food is eaten during that month than any other. Prices on all foodstuffs have already begun to rise.

A Glimpse at the Trials of Building. I wonder if you would be interested in a glimpse at the manner of building and gathering the building material.

The stone used is of a semi-coral formation broken out of the sea and brought to us on donkeys.

The lime is brought from a neighboring island and we have to burn and prepare it on the ground. A man who owns a boat comes to get a contract for a boat-load of unburned lime. He will tell you that his boat holds twice as much as it does, and as no two boats are exactly alike it is often difficult to tell how much it will hold and how much it is worth. Then comes the disagreeable process of bargaining. He will not come down to your terms and if he thinks you are in a hurry for the material, be it lime, wood or stone, he will go away, then it is your turn to bluff. He may come back but if you are in immediate need of the material and are not quite sure that you can get it elsewhere at your price, you would better advance your price a little then he will begin all over again and come down nearer your figures, then you have to split the difference and finish the bargain. You must give him an advance and take a receipt from him. Now he is ready to start and promises faithfully to start the same day and return in three days, but in three days you will probably hear that he has not yet started. You may be out of lime and the masons will have to remain idle or seek work elsewhere until the lime arrives and is burned. You send for your boatman and give vent to your righteous wrath, but you do not accomplish anything for he has, at least, two or three very plausible excuses ready for you and gives you as many faithful promises to start at once, probably with the same result as before. One is exasperated nearly beyond endurance.

This is the way one's patience is tried nearly every day by oriental procrastination and untruthfulness and one thinks often of Kipling's words :

“ The end of the fight
Is a tombstone white,
With the name of the late deceased.
And the epitaph drear—
A fool lies here
Who tried to hustle the east.”

The masons and the other workmen need constant oversight. If one leaves them alone they do more talking and smoking than work. And not only that but they do poor work and build in some way contrary to instructions, and all that has been done during your absence must be broken down which means a waste of time and material. So you see there is a considerable difference between the way we have to build in this country and the way you would build at home where a contractor would build exactly according to your plans and finish at the time promised or lose



THE HOSPITAL AT BAHREIN—INTERIOR.

money by a failure to do so. Or if you preferred to be your own contractor you would order material by telephone and get it when you needed it except under extraordinary circumstances.

We have had a couple of strikes also this summer but fortunately the "Labor Union" was not very strong and we won both.

Reinforcements. We hope soon to welcome Miss DePree and Mr. Van Ess to the field. How we wish a doctor were coming out also. I cannot understand the difficulty in finding men with such large "Student Volunteer" enrollment in our colleges.

Interior. I wish some of our friends would send some large lithographs to put up in the wards, waiting-room, etc. We have Arabic texts but only a few read and they do not take the place of interesting pictures that they can understand such as scenery, animals, ships, President of United States, a battle scene or two, especially with horses in foreground, large buildings, etc.

SUNDAY SERVICE.

MRS. AMY C. ZWEMER.

The Room. This would strike a stranger as a peculiar place for a service; there are three narrow doors, a small window looking on to the road and another overlooking the yard, over one door is a text, near the door is the reading desk (no eagle with outspread wings, but an old packing case trimmed off, painted and varnished, and covering the top a nice maroon rep cloth). At the side of the desk the small organ stands, it belonged to Mr. Stone; a small picture of him has been pasted on the cover, and serves to remind us of a faithful worker, and is an incentive to aim to be like him.

The seats for the congregation are two long benches of different styles and height, also six Baghdad chairs; several maps and a blackboard cover the walls. The chapel serves for schoolroom as well, and then there is the punkah which is waved to and fro to keep off a few of the flies and give us a little air.

The Congregation Consists of the workers and their families and sometimes a few inquirers, or a man or two from curiosity steps in. One morning a big fellow was listening outside, but desiring to hear more and have a better view, perhaps, he came inside. He was carrying a black kettle in his hand; he deposited it on the mat just behind the preacher, and then walked to a seat near some of the men. At a side door the pet leper of the Mission is seated; he is a regular attendant at the services and used to sit inside, but at last he got so much worse and smelled so badly, it was thought pleasanter to have him sit on the other side of the open door; he can hear just as well, and the breeze from certain points reminds us that he is present.

The Service

Is opened with a hymn. When the tune and words are familiar quite a volume of sound is heard and the Heavenly Father listens, although it sounds queer to us, and accepts the song as a token of worship, a desire to praise Him in His holy temple. Then prayer is offered, reading of Scripture, another hymn, and then the collection; very often we are reminded of "Alexander the coppersmith," but each one has been trained to bring something, and out of this same collection the Bahrein Church, though small, has sent relief to famine stricken parts of India and China. After the collection is the sermon and then another hymn and prayer. We all feel that we would not like to miss the service, although it is so plain and simple, no choir, no grand music, but just a plain service where a few isolated believers meet to worship the God of Abraham, and where we expect the blessing promised to Abraham that "Ismael shall live before Me."

WOMEN PATIENTS.

MRS. MARION WELLS THOMS, M. D.

The women's dispensary has been kept open all through the hot weather and the number of women treated during the past five months is greater than the number treated in any other corresponding length of time since the dispensary was opened. Summer visitors from Moharrek helped to swell the number. We do not realize that we live in a Summer resort, but so our neighbors on Moharrek regard Bahrein. Sheikh Esa and all his retinue come over here and remain two months or so. The sheikh has a castle outside the town, but most of the people build new summer residences each year of date branches and mats. Regular settlements spring up like magic on every breezy bit of beach. When the first cool weather comes the houses are pulled down and the materials sold to the town people who use them for fuel or for patching up their huts for the winter.

Many of the women, especially of the upper class, are not allowed to go back and forth between the two islands at will, and avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by their stay here to

visit the dispensary. We have found some of these women of more than average intelligence and less bigoted than most we meet.

A drought and resulting famine in some parts of Persia has driven a good many of the inhabitants to seek their fortunes—or misfortunes—here. A large proportion of the laborers on the hospital have been of this class, and some mornings nearly all our patients have been the sick wives and children. These are unsatisfactory patients in several ways. We have difficulty both in understanding their troubles and in giving directions about medicine. Then, of course, they cannot understand anything of the Gospel. To be sure some one who understands both Arabic and Persian sometimes volunteers an interpretation, but we are never sure of its orthodoxy.

As the lower floor of the hospital was practically finished we decided to leave our cramped quarters here about the middle of October and begin our dispensary work there, even though work still remained to be done, and the building could not be formally opened at that time. We tried to close the dispensary for a whole week in order to move and get settled, but so many continued to come each morning that it was really closed only two days. We find the women's quarters there a pleasing contrast to our small, inconvenient room here, where we used to feel almost suffocated if the morning were close. The fine, broad verandahs and many doors make the house as cool and airy as it is possible to have it. The rooms for women are two—a chapel or waiting room and a treatment room down stairs, besides a ward large enough for eight beds up stairs. In the chapel we have our Gospel reading and "lay preaching" before treating the women. Around two sides of the room are benches, but most of the women prefer to sit on the clean matting on the floor where they feel more at home.

The first morning not one of the eighteen present ventured to sit on the benches. I thought there would be a good deal of excitement among the women at first, but only one or two who said, "In sha Allah," our house would be blessed, acted otherwise than as if they had been always coming there.

Last week we admitted our first woman in-patient to the woman's ward. I hope she is the first of a long line who will be benefited bodily and spiritually by our ministrations, but I hope

that few of her successors will be as erratic as she is—or has been. She is an old black woman, a slave I think, but as she speaks only a few words of Arabic, we have not been able to learn much about her. She had a cataract in one eye which she seemed anxious to have removed. It was also explained to her that she must remain in the hospital a number of days and she agreed to come. She was very dirty and ragged, and we wanted to give her a bath and put on a clean garment before taking her into the operating room. She was perfectly docile and apparently ready both for the bath and the clean dress, but she took a sudden fright at some movement of mine and rushed out half-dressed upon the verandah. I could not restrain her without exerting force, which I did not want to exert unless it proved to be necessary. She kept going from pillar to pillar down past the men's wards, and even the warning that there were men there had no effect upon her. Usually that is all that is needed to cause any woman to retreat. She was all the time calling out quite loudly, and the people in the huts nearby came out to see the cause of the commotion. All I could understand was, "I am an old woman." Finally when we were just half-way round the hospital she tried to climb over the railing of the verandah and a mason came to the rescue. He spoke to her in Persian and she told him she was afraid she was going to be killed. He reassured her and I led her back to the bath-room. When dressed in a clean pink garment, with a pink handkerchief tied over head, she looked not unlike one of our southern "mammies." She seemed to feel very sorry that she had been so frightened, and wished to embrace us altogether more than we cared to have her. She had been told that the doctor would not benefit her eye any and felt suspicious. That she is very ignorant you may judge from the question she asked in the morning. She wanted to know if we were going to take her eye out, cut it, and put it back again. She said if we intended doing that she would not consent to stay. She seemed much pleased to be able to count the doctor's fingers after he removed the cataract and has been doing nicely, but she is anxious to know how much longer she must stay. I thought a photograph of the first woman in-patient of the Mason Memorial Hospital would be interesting to our friends and we tried to take one, but the only one we succeeded in obtaining can scarcely be reproduced. We tried to

avoid exciting her in any way, but she became suspicious of something and got her feet on the floor as if to flee at the first indication of danger. It is hard not to feel impatient with such ignorance and not to feel depressed at being so misunderstood, but we must take lessons from the "patience of Christ" and learn to "have compassion upon the ignorant."

BAHREIN, PERSIAN GULF,
November 24, 1902.

A TOUR IN OMAN.

REV. JAMES CANTINE.

On my return early in September from my vacation in India, I at once set about preparing for a long tour inland. This meant the assorting of a couple of hundred scriptures; the buying of presents for the half-dozen sheikhs, whose territory we expected to pass through and whose guests we might be; and the packing of the same, with some provisions and our personal belongings, in three voluminous saddle bags. My two companions were Said and Aly. Said is our colporter, and as our main object was Bible selling, it was his paramount claims which decided times and places on our schedule. Aly was the guide and general manager for the expedition. In Muscat he is my servant, but on the road and among the democratic Arabs, a fellow traveller whose welcome was not a jot less than my own.

The Party.

Our objective point was the Green Mountains, about a hundred miles inland. This region is supposed to be the most attractive part of Oman, and to have passed through it gives one, among the Arabs, considerable prestige. Twice in previous years I had attempted to reach it, but each time had been turned back by fighting among the tribes. This year I fortunately happened among them just as a truce was being arranged and neither side had any excuse for putting obstacles in my way.

Nachl.

The first large town on our program was Nachl, two or three days journey from Muscat. We put up in the house of a Persian friend of Aly, and found it much more satisfactory than having to accept such quarters as the Sheikh could at a moment's notice give us. The house, which is two

storied and in a very good locality, is said to be for sale and we are trying to buy it, but as the Sultan decidedly discourages the selling of property to foreigners, our success is doubtful. We greatly need a place to which our colporters can go for a change in the summer, and Nachl, with its comparatively settled rule, its ease of access from the coast, and because it is on the road to other populous districts, is, I think, the first town inland in which we should open a sort of out-station. We remained here three days and found the people, great and small, most cordial. I could recognize a considerable change for the better in this respect since a former visit, probably due to the fact that they now are so well acquainted with us and our colporters. As Said had spent a month here during the summer and had sold over two hundred books, we thought it best to remain only long enough to engage donkeys to take us two days further on to the foot of the mountain.

On our way thither occurred an incident rather typical of the country. We were going through a narrow defile in the mountains about eight o'clock in the evening, when ahead of us we heard a signal gun and shortly afterwards the Arab war cry. No one said anything—there is little talking at night when on doubtful ground—but I rather thought we were in for some attention, and when the ominous challenge "*stand*" rang out, and we were surrounded by armed men, there was no doubt of it. Our donkey drivers who were outside their own territory, were very badly frightened. However, we were only targets for many questions as to our destination, purpose, etc., and finally were allowed to depart in peace. It seems they had heard that the Sultan was sending a large sum of money to a rival tribe and we were suspected of having it. For an outsider who is not mixed up in their blood feuds and who makes no display of wealth there is little danger from travelling in Oman, though the piles of stone one is constantly passing along the way, each covering the body of some victim of violence, are not very reassuring. In the morning the chief sheikh of these Arabs, Uasir bin Suleiman, came to our camp, after having sent a present of meat with apologies for the rudeness of his people, and taking us to their neighboring village, insisted that we should wait until the afternoon and travel in his company. He also was going

on a sort of embassy to meet the sheikh of the mountain and it would have been very nice for us to have traveled with such a large number, but our poor pack animals could not keep up with theirs, nor on reaching the mountain were we permitted to ascend until the business between the two sheikhs had been finished.

Result of Arab Warfare. At the foot of the mountain we came upon a melancholy result of their tribal warfare. I had reached this point two years before and there were several villages full of life and activity. Now the buildings were all demolished, excepting those which were mosques, and the people driven away. Worst of all the water courses were destroyed and every tree cut down or burnt. These hostile villages just at their door were a constant menace to the mountain people, and if they had taken and settled them with their own tribe they might have been commended. But they never do that. Their only idea of successful warfare is killing without any risk to themselves and the wanton destruction of their enemies' property. As a result there are unending reprisals along their borders and in these regions a retrogression in population and property.

While waiting for permission to proceed we spent our time at a little village called Major, about a third of the way up the mountain, which here is quite precipitous. There are three villages in the neighborhood all of them prettily located on spurs of the hillside, with running water and an abundance of shade from orange, pomegranate and mango trees. We were above the limit of the date but not yet among the walnut and other trees of the mountain top.

The Ascent of the Mountain. At last, after several days of suspense, and just as we were making arrangements to return, we were gladdened to hear that donkeys, the strong and sure footed mountain bred, had come to take us on. We started off very early in the morning by moonlight, and it took two hours of steady work to zig-zag our way to the top. Of course we walked—it was almost climbing—and the hardest bit of work in that line I ever have done. When the summit was reached it was almost as bad going down on the other side and it was with a decided feeling of relief that at sunrise, four hours after starting, we stretched ourselves out on the ground to wait for the donkey loads to be rearranged so that we could ride. We had reached the rocky plateau

of the mountain, cut up by narrow and deep defiles and only a shade less barren than the plains below. The thorn bushes were a little more numerous and grew a little larger and that was about all. But the air was delightfully fresh and bracing and it was not long before we reached Seek where the sheikh was staying. Our reception was about what we had expected. He was quite willing to take our present, a field glass, which he had expressed a desire

Arab Rapacity.

for, and he was not diffident about asking for other things, and on our departure, which he and we both agreed in hurrying forward, he gave us a list of what he trusted we would send him from Muscat. This tribe the Beni Ream are ruled by two rival sheikhs, Hamyar and Hamdan, though as one had murdered the other's father and brother, rivalry does not exactly describe the relations between them. The second one, Hamdan, I met a few days later and thought a great improvement on the former until he absolutely refused to let us proceed before I had handed over to him my watch, which unfortunately he had seen. The fine old man who had welcomed Peter Zwemer some six years ago had been killed, and these men were his successors. I have never met this undisguised rapacity elsewhere in Oman and it argues rather ill for our being able to make use of this high ground during our hot season. However, the smaller sheikhs are not so bad, and especially at a place called Sheraga were we most cordially treated by its head man, and I was very glad to be able to make return for his hospitality a few weeks later when he visited me at Muscat. This village is the most beautiful one I have seen in Oman, and except for the difficulty in reaching it would seem to be a pleasant place at which to stay for a few weeks. The experiment of living among the natives inland has not yet been tried by our missionaries as it is sure eventually to be when we get a larger force.

Nezwa.

To reach Nezwa, which was the last town in our itinerary, we had to descend almost as far and as abruptly as we had come up, and here found ourselves on the borders of the Roba el-Khaly (the empty or deserted place) as the maps give it, which extends southwestward to the centre of the peninsula. The town, one of the largest in all Oman, is ruled, at least half of it, by a governor appointed by the Sultan, and he did all he could to make our stay pleasant, which it really

was. It is a very old city and under the Persian rule, some years ago, it was their capital. The immense circular fort, built by them, still exists in its primitive strength. I never saw a place whose walls inside and out were so pitted by bullet marks, and every house is loop-holed for defense. We wished, when the time came to leave, to return to Muscat by the easier road which leads through the valleys to the south of the mountain, but on account of danger from the Bedouins we were not allowed to do so. That the danger was real was shown a few days after we had left, when because of the execution of two or three of their chief men who had been caught in some offence, the tribesmen came out, as venomous, as numerous and as unreasoning as a swarm of hornets.

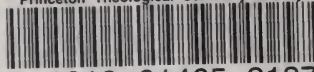
Having to return by the same route made the latter part of our tour uninteresting, at least to my readers, and I will close by trying to sum up results.

Books All Sold. We were successful in selling all of the scriptures taken with us, mostly at Nezwa. Here instead of canvassing in the streets and bazaar, where interference from some jealous Mohammedan was sure to come, checking sales and causing the return of books already sold, Said kept to the house given to us. In a day it was universally known that books had come with the strangers, and a constant succession of purchasers soon finished our stock. Much of the demand may have been due to this being the first time a colporter had ever visited them, but we are looking forward to another visit with a larger supply in the near future.

The religious talks and arguments in which Said took the major part, were always a feature wherever we went, and generally centered about the sufficiency of the Koran or the integrity of the Gospel. Stopping only for two or three days at the longest in any one place, we had time only for the seed sowing. The growth and the harvest is for the future.

The Need for a Medical Missionary. There was one thing deeply impressed upon me during the tour, and that is our need of a medical man for this sort of work. Our party got through in places only by practically paying for the privilege, in others we were tolerated as something of a curiosity, or because the shortness of our stay scarcely made active opposition worth while. But a doctor would disarm prejudice and overcome indifference by services rendered. As a simple traveller one can generally pass to and fro through most of Oman, but in order to make a definite and abiding impression upon the people we must be able to remain among them for a longer time. This would be easy for a doctor and I can scarcely recognize the limits to the influence he might exert or exaggerate his importance in the evangelization of this part of Arabia. The need for such a helper in the Lord's work is so imperative that I do not doubt but that he is putting it in someone's heart to come out to us. For such the welcome is assured.

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